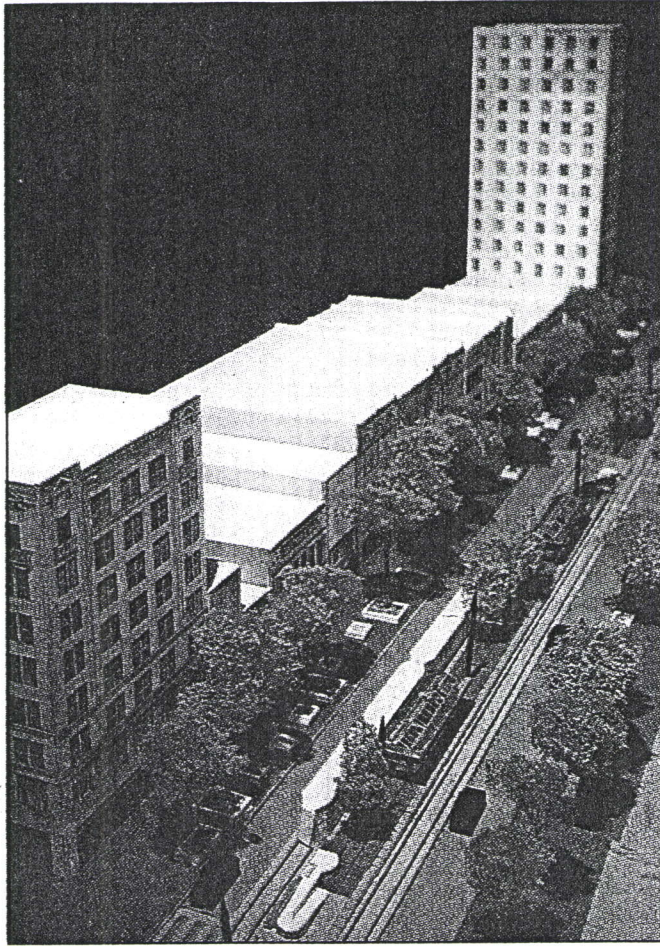


## Utah

5/019/030  
Fri. Oct. 11, 1996

BUSINESS

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From a 300 South vantage point looking north, model shows how a two-track light-rail system would look running on Salt Lake City's Main Street.

"Surgeons and radiologists keep looking and looking and asking questions right up until the time they make that first incision," he says. "You don't want to be so cocky that you stop asking questions."

A lot is at stake. The city wants to have more than just rails and coaches running down its streets, and UTA doesn't want to go over budget by starting from scratch in laying out a new downtown route three years after the Main Street scenario was approved.

Rerouting the line to a single-track loop route tying together State Street and West Temple likely would force new environmental impact and ridership studies, UTA of-

## Westwater Canyon: Wild, Scenic — And Full of Gold?

BY CHRISTOPHER SMITH

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

MOAB — Ron and Ray Pene say they've struck gold along the banks of the Colorado River. Now the federal government wants to protect the scenery and prevent them from mining their alleged mother lode.

"We figure there is \$5 million to \$700 million worth of gold just in the placer claims alone," Grand County Councilman Ray Pene says of the claims his Pene Mining family partnership established in 1984, 40 miles northeast of Moab in Westwater Canyon. "If the BLM prevents us from mining, there will be a price to pay. . . . We will be owed millions and millions of dollars."

Two studies — one by the now-defunct Bureau of Mines and the other by the Bureau of Land Management — indicated there is no gold or any other mineral of value in sufficient quantity in Westwater Canyon, considered by national conservation groups as a prime candidate for federal "wild and scenic river" protection. A new, detailed BLM mining claim — called "validity examination" — is now under way to conclusively determine if the Pene mining claims have value. That new study, which will cost BLM an estimated \$10,000, is expected to be finished this winter.

"The Pene mining claims are legal, but we have undertaken a process to determine the economic viability of a mining operation in that location," says Kate Kitchell, BLM Moab District manager. "It's possible there is mineral value and, if so, the validity examination will reveal that. We are definitely not out to invalidate those mining claims."

However, if the new study shows that there is not enough gold to "prove" the claims, the BLM will begin proceedings to quash the Pene brothers' dreams of a gold mine in Westwater. Such a move would please conservation groups such as Friends of Westwater, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance and the Utah Rivers Council, which want Westwater Canyon federally protected as wilderness.

BLM has determined that the canyon's "highest desired use" is for recreation and scenery, not mining. The agency

See GROUP, Page D-5

See CLAIM HOLDER, Page D-5



## Claim Holder: BLM Must Pay If It Blocks My Gold Mine

■ Continued from D-1

has proposed withdrawing 3,385 acres of Westwater Canyon from any future mineral entry or general development for the next 50 years. A public hearing on the withdrawal will be held Wednesday at 7 p.m. at BLM's Moab office, 82 E. Dogwood St.

"Westwater is one of the classic wild and scenic rivers in the entire United States," says Zach Frankel, director of the Utah Rivers Council. "This current debate that could create a mine along Utah's most popular whitewater river is a wake-up call to the state's congressional delegation and governor that wild and scenic designation is not a bogeyman but a critical means of protecting recreation, scenery, fishery values and tourism dollars."

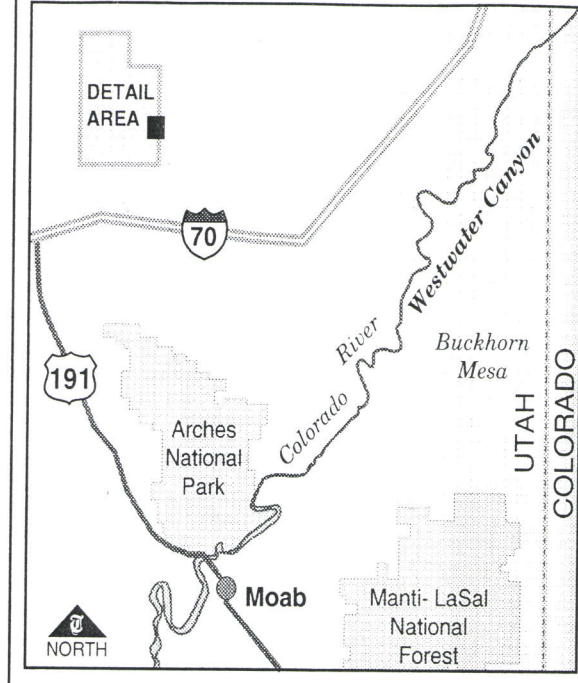
Even if the BLM goes ahead with the proposed 50-year withdrawal, the Pene Mining claims remain valid. Only a determination of insufficient economic justification for the gold mine would doom the claims. Additionally, since the claims were made after Westwater was designated as a wilderness study area, Kitchell says any future mining — no matter how rich the strike — would be limited by a "non-impairment standard," meaning little more than panning or using a sluice box.

Canyon conservationists say they are angry that the Penes were able to file mining claims in the canyon due to a BLM oversight.

BLM initially withdrew Westwater Canyon from mining in 1975, because of its potential as a wild and scenic river corridor, but did not renew the withdrawal when it lapsed in 1982. Ron Pene, who lives in Grand Junction, filed the first round of claims in the canyon in 1984, prompting BLM to impose an emergency withdrawal in 1985 that continues today. BLM wants the 50-year withdrawal to ensure that no

## Westwater Wrangle

Two brothers have staked gold claims in Westwater Canyon they say are worth millions of dollars. Bureau of Land Management officials, however, want to protect the land from mining.



The Salt Lake Tribune

similar lapses happen again.

"It is also a recognition of the incredible recreation and aesthetic values in Westwater Canyon," says Kitchell.

Ray Pene, who voted against including Westwater Canyon in Grand County's wilderness-area recommendations, believes the BLM withdrawal is Uncle Sam's way of jumping his claim.

"It just chaps my hide that BLM is trying to circumvent the mining law and do whatever they can to stop us," he said.

## Group Opposes Design Of Light Rail

■ Continued from D-1

officials say.

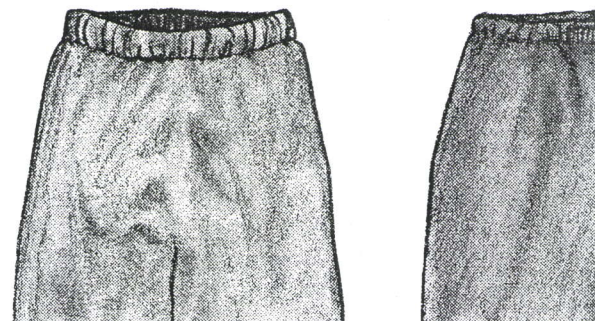
All this is complicated by several other downtown projects.

The Salt Lake Redevelopment Agency has budgeted \$8 million to \$10 million to redesign downtown's 25-year-old sidewalks, planter boxes and fountains, and it does not want UTA to build stations in the middle of Main Street that do not conform to those designs.

Banker Eccles says there is no mystery. He has spoken loud and long during the past three years against double tracks down Main Street in front of his bank's headquarters. He favors single tracks in a loop tying together State Street and West Temple via North Temple. That would put the train's northern terminus next to the Salt Palace instead of two blocks to the west on South Temple at the Delta Center.

Add to all of this the required 10-month closure of the intersection at Main Street and South Temple next year when Mormon Church-owned Zions Securities begins building an underground multilevel parking structure. That subterranean structure would replace surface parking lots lost to construction around

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